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Exploring Extended Kinship in Twenty-First-Century China: A Conceptual Case Study

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Abstract

Many observers of contemporary China notice the revival of the so-called traditional culture. This includes the public presence of rituals and artefacts that relate with traditional kinship, such as ancestral halls. This article explores a case in Shenzhen, the Huang lineage and the larger surname group. A methodological issue looms large: What exactly was the "tradition" that is perceived as reviving? The field of historical studies on Chinese kinship is a highly contested domain, especially regarding the nature and role of lineages. Therefore, we designed our article as a "conceptual case study": we reflect upon the state of our knowledge about Chinese kinship in the traditional sense, develop a tentative conceptual framework, and apply this on our case. Central issues include the relationship between descent as constructed and performed via kinship rituals and patterns of cooperation among members of a lineage and the wider surname group.

Keywords

Shenzhen, lineages, surname associations, guanxi, ancestral cult, shareholding cooperatives

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Introduction

After China had embarked on market reforms in 1978, the country underwent a rapid process of economic growth and social change. Given the radical critique of tradition by the Communist Party between 1949 and 1978, most observers were slow in recognising the fact that this has been accompanied by a revival of traditional forms of social life in many facets. One particularly interesting phenomenon is the resurgence of kinship ritual, which often goes hand in hand with the emergence of a distinct group of "villagers-in-the-city" (Wang, 2015) as a result of the inclusion of rural into urban areas (Kipnis, 2017).

This phenomenon is salient in research on "urban villages" in the context of the political economy of urban governance (Bach, 2017; Cheng, 2014; Chung and Unger, 2013; O'Donnell, 2017a; Tang, 2015). Research is rare that focuses on the phenomenon of kinship and lineages in the first place and elucidates how exactly the revival unfolds (Trémon, 2015a, 2015b). Although Chinese researchers noticed this early (Dai and Zhang, 2014), in-depth research in the context of urban villages is mostly lacking, with notable exceptions such as Zhou (2014) who discusses the transition from lineage-based economic organisation to modern corporate forms in Guangzhou. The phenomenon has attracted attention by Japanese researchers, as reflected in the volume of collected papers edited by Segawa and Kawagusa (2016). In his contribution on lineages in the Pearl River delta, Kawagusa (2016) distinguishes between the period of "restoration" (*fukugen*) between 1978 and 2000 and the period of "renaissance" (*fukkō*) since 2000 in which lineages seem to become an integral part of public life.

What is the precise reference of "tradition" when diagnosing its revival? Clearly, much depends on how we conceptualise basic concepts such as "lineage" when interpreting information from the field. However, when we go back to the historical situation, these concepts appear to be highly controversial in recent studies on social and economic history. The historical record unearthed in recent meticulous studies of documents shows that Chinese extended kinship organisation was highly flexible and adaptive to local circumstances (Zheng, 2001). At the same time, we need to distinguish neatly between social practices and beliefs in the population and the norms of extended kinship that were endorsed and disseminated by the Confucian elites, even in the context of superficially clear cases such as gender relations (Siu and Chan, 2010). Since the most influential paradigm of Chinese lineages developed by Maurice Freedman was mainly based on field evidence from Hong Kong New Territories, critics pointed out that the colonial rulers in Hong Kong actively supported forms of "tradition" that partly matched with the Confucian views, thus stabilising a specific form of lineage which was then interpreted as reflecting the standard form (Chun, 2000; Cheung, 2016).

This diagnosis raises the question, what are the implications for evaluating the contemporary revival? Our article wants to tackle this question in applying a two-pronged strategy:

Firstly, we present a condensed critical account of the current status of conceptual work and show directions towards a new scheme that can be applied on field data.

Secondly, we explore the validity and usefulness of this scheme in analysing one case study. That means, this article is an empirically informed contribution to concept formation and method in contemporary Chinese studies.

Our case is taken from the megalopolis Shenzhen, arguably one of the most globalised mainland Chinese cities. In the context of urban redevelopment, projects in tourism and leisure often include the reconstruction of ancestral halls and temples and their official recognition as "cultural heritage." Today, this goes along with the active promotion of traditional Chinese values by the Communist Party, such as elevating "filial piety" (孝, *xiao*) to one of the pillars of Chinese society pursuing the "China dream." Contrary to the radical cultural critique of the past, today Confucianism is seen as a national spiritual legacy that deserves not only respect but renewed promotion, both by civil society actors and by government authorities (Billioud, 2007; Walton, 2018). Against this background, the revival of lineages is a facet of emerging "cultural governance" in China (Oakes, 2017; Perry, 2013).

We focus on the Huang (黄, *Cantonese*: *Wong*), who actively express their identity as a descent group locally, nationally, and internationally. The surname Huang is one of the most common surnames in China, about 27 million individuals with this name live in Mainland China, and globally there are an estimated 60 million people with this name (the numbers differ widely across various sources but are in these dimensions) (*Baidu baike*, 2019a). However, we need to distinguish between the individuals associated with the Huang surname and the local lineages in Shenzhen. The Huang are kinship groups located in Shenzhen which relate with other groups with the same surname at many other locations. Thus, they represent the ideal context to explore the meaning and function of various concepts and ideas related to kinship in modern China and relate these to the insights gained from new developments in social and economic history.

The case analysed in our article is embedded in long-term fieldwork in Shenzhen launched in 2015, partly together with Feng Xingyuan (Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, Rural Development Institute); author Guo Man is a permanent resident of Shenzhen and conducted regular activities of participant observation and interviewing, intensified by periods of joint field activities with the second author Carsten Herrmann-Pillath at least twice a year. The conceptual work grounds in a recent monograph by Herrmann-Pillath (2017) elaborating on the relationship between ritual, culture, and economy. The case of the Huang came to our attention when noticing the transregional networks of Huang and the strong presence of Huang in the Internet (both WWW and WeChat). That means, different from other cases, we can also rely on rich textual materials to track the activities in the context of kinship. This is an advantage because, as is well known from research on kinship groups in Hong Kong, members of lineages often refrain from giving detailed information about their activities, so that information in the Internet, voluntarily provided, is a good alternative.

Rethinking Chinese Extended Kinship

Our starting point is the English word "clan," which is often used in referring to the global Huang at the international conventions of the "World Huang surname association" (世界黄氏宗亲会, *Shijie Huang shi zongqinhui*). In the 1980s, the association emerged out of increasing contacts among national Huang associations in Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and the United States, formally established at a convention at Taipei in 1980 (*Geren*

tushuguan, 2019a). It is physically manifest in global conventions: one of the biggest took place in Shenzhen in 2002, when a traditional "common pot" feast was held on Xiasha plaza on Yuanxiao eve, with 3,800 tables and 60,000 guests (mostly Huang) attending, arguably the biggest event of that kind in history (*Nandu wang,* 2019).

In modern anthropological and sociological uses, the English "clan" corresponds to the Chinese *zongzu* (宗族), which mostly refers to what anthropologists call the "lineage." The title of the international association combines this term with two others: The term *shi* (氏, family name) is often used to denote a wider kinship group (氏族, *shizu*), thus similar to "clan," and the term *qin* (亲, kin) conveys the meaning of closeness and emotions of belonging that are constitutive of kinship relations. In English, the association also refers to the "Huang family." Sometimes the terms are combined, such as in a 2016 printed newsletter of the "World Huang General Chamber of Commerce", which has *Huang shi zongzu* (黄氏宗族) in its headline. But obviously, this does not imply that the surname association is a clan in the anthropological sense of the term: for example, the acting president of the association, Huang Yingchao, is referred to as a "head of clan" (宗长, *zong zhang*), but this refers to his role as the leader of the local Huang at Xiasha village in Shenzhen, and in gatherings of Huang from different locations, the respective *zong zhang* lead the various groups (*Geren tushuguan,* 2019b; *Jiangxia Huang zu wang,* 2019a). That means, the clan is a local structure, to be distinguished from the surname group with global reach.

There are two problems here, however, that we need to explore in more detail.

The first relates to the notion of descent. The Huang surname includes a subgroup which is often represented as the core of Huang identity, the Jiangxia Huang with a founding ancestor in Tang dynasty, Huang Qiaoshan. The larger group refers to the Huang Kingdom in the Warring States period. The ancestral hall of the local clan at Xiasha has a mural showing the local descent line starting with a more recent descendant of Huang Qiaoshan. Therefore, the question is where the actual boundaries of the clan are located, since the descent line is an open construct in terms of chronological depth (on the role of founding ancestors, cf. Cohen, 2017; Trémon, 2014).

The second is the relationship between the clan as ritual entity and the local kinship group. This transpires in the complex uses of the term "lineage" in Chinese studies and its reference to Chinese terms. According to several authoritative sources, the correct Chinese correspondence to "lineage" would be *jiazu* (家族) (Cohen, 1990; Fei, 1947; Gui, 2014), but this is used rarely in places such as Shenzhen when referring to the revival of kinship ritual. Indeed, local people tend to use the term *zongzu* when referring to the ritual activities, but mostly simply speak of their village or often denote themselves as descendants of a specific ancestor.

"Clan" and "lineage" are clearly distinguished by sinologists and historical anthropologists (e.g. Baker, 1979), but often mixed up by sociologists and economists. One of the standard distinctions is to refer to the clan as an alliance between lineages with the same surname or as an artificial descent group of considerable size, mostly in an urban context (Baker, 1977). However, this definition blurs the distinction between "higher-order lineages" and clans, since the former also refers to alliances between branches of lineages that trace themselves back to the same ancestor.

In terms of the history of the disciplines, the notion of "lineage" was given an authoritative conceptual frame by Maurice Freedman (1967), based on research in Southeast Asia, South China, and, specifically, the lineages in the New Territories of Hong Kong. This approach defined the lineage as a corporate body that owns land collectively and acts as a corporate landlord, performs collective rituals of ancestor worship, and relates ritually to the Chinese state as a central element of village self-organisation according to clan rules. The subsequent discussion and research have shown that this view may seriously bias our view on Chinese kinship ritual and practice (Cohen, 1990; Chun, 2000; Stafford, 2000).

Fei Xiaotong (1947), in suggesting *jiazu* (in English translations, translated back as "patrilineage"), already had criticised Western approaches to Chinese extended kinship (he received his PhD at London) (Harrell, 2011). In his view, the *jiazu* is a flexible structure with many possible circles of expansion, reaching from the nuclear family to what we designate as "lineage" (for a related focus on *jia* including lineages, see Gates, 1996: 95ff.). It also has a ritual dimension, in terms of religious practices within the family dwelling (such as an altar) and ancestor worship, such as "sweeping the graves." Whereas the *zongzu* is a landowning corporate body as defined by Freedman, the *jiazu* is an economic organisation in many shapes and with many functions, as epitomised in the Chinese form of "family business" (家族企业, *jiazu qiye*). This implies flexibility in living the boundaries of the *jiazu*: most importantly, a concrete *jiazu* may include affinal kin (in family business, e.g., the daughter's husband may be involved in a prominent position). These affinal relations are mostly created by the "kin work" of women (Chan WH, 2010).

Following Chun (2000), a very complicated issue is the relationship between lineage and kinship in general. This relates to three distinct fundamental terms in Chinese, *zong* (宗, ancestor), *jia* (家, family), and *qin* (亲, kin), which combine with other characters, especially *zu* (族, descent), in forming more specific terms (on historical etymology, see Ebrey and Watson, 1986). One way to distinguish between the *jiazu* and *zongzu* is to refer to *zongzu* as the descent line in terms of ritual, that is, the continuation of ancestral worship across the generations. This does not automatically imply genealogical relatedness in terms of consanguinity: it is not biological descent that creates ritual, but ritual that performs descent culturally. Accordingly, the "ancestor" can be an historically distant person, making factual consanguinity elusive; or families may adopt male successors who fulfil the ritual duties, and so on.

In comparison, the *jiazu* may not necessarily translate into ritualistic eminence in terms of *zongzu,* which also involves a different role of public rituals, especially regarding the public display of genealogies in ancestral halls versus keeping them at home (Cohen, 1990). The *jia* as such is a unit that is established by marriage, thus is rooted in a social act that explicitly avoids consanguinity because of exogamy rules. Hence, we need heed attention to *qin* here which refers to closeness of feelings and social interactions and, therefore, may include both agnatic and affinal kin and is independent from consanguinity. We might refer the term *jiazu* to "conviviality," living together, with shared experiences, shared economic activities and assets, and so on. That means, in more abstract terms, in analysing lineages we must distinguish between a

vertical and a horizontal dimension, with the former connecting to the notion of ritual descent, and the latter connecting to families and kin in shared life worlds, such as the village community (this follows Gui, 2014). Strict patrilineality is the reflection of the centuries-long imposition of Neoconfucian orthodoxy on Chinese society but does not necessarily reflect social practices. The pre-eminence of *zongzu* in South China was the result of a deliberate promulgation of Neoconfucian ideas via many channels (Ebrey, 1985; Faure, 2007).

The term *jiazu* or generally *zu* is also used in the most comprehensive reassessment of historical kinship organisation by Zheng Zhenman (2001) (in the translation, the English title has "Family Lineage Organization" which renders the Chinese "jiazu zuzhi" 家族组织). Like Fei Xiaotong, the *jia* refers to the family as a social unit that can be extended in many ways, with the lineage *zu* as the primordial form. However, when referring to different types of lineages, Zheng adds the term *zong*, resulting in the English translation of *zongzu* into "lineage," but not "clan."

Zheng argues that the lineage is a flexible organisational form centred on the notion of descent which is determined by the developmental cycles of the family under changing and varying local conditions. Family division is a central phenomenon, which would almost necessarily imply a decline of social status and wealth of single families, thus producing strong incentives to create institutional forms by which the family as a group of shared descent can maintain cooperation undergirded by shared assets: This results in what Zheng calls an "inheritance lineage." The inheritance lineage typically emerges from large families which want to maintain their social position. A central motive is the parallel transfer of certain assets and ritual obligations of ancestor worship to the next generation: Therefore, *zong* comes into play here, and not just *jia*. Once this primordial form of lineage is established, other organisational forms become possible. One is the "control-subordination lineage," based on territorial ties; the other is the "contractual lineage," based on common interests.

The control-subordination lineage is ideal-typically represented by single-lineage villages or villages with dominant lineages where the lineage is also a form of grassroots-level political organisation by local elites. One important aspect is the thinning out of consanguineal relations among the members of the group which only share a distant ancestor. This is reflected in the internal branching of the lineage, resulting in internal stratification of branches, with one branch assuming the elite and leadership role. In comparison, the contractual lineage is the most flexible form that activates kinship to form a wide range of functional organisations devoted to specific goals, in Qing dynasty increasingly business activities. The central institutional feature is the "share" (股份, *gufen*): in contractual lineages, the rights of members are embodied in the shares that define shared ownership in the assets of the lineage and give the right to monitor and even have voice in the organisational decision-making, for instance, in lineage meetings (shareholder assemblies).

The common feature of these different forms of lineage is ritual related to descent. On the one hand, maintaining proper forms of ancestral ritual signalling relative social status is a major function of more complex lineage organisation, but at the same time, this is also a medium by which new forms of organisation can be created, including business

enterprises (Faure, 1996, 2006; Zelin, 2009). This leads us to consider the role of kinship relative to other social relations. We can put Zheng's contractual lineages in the context of the extremely rich Chinese associational life (mostly designated 会, *hui*), such as native place associations (Sangren, 1984). This is where we can place the phenomenon of surname associations which mostly use the term *shi* (氏, family name). This term complicates our discussion further, since *shi* on the one hand relates to "surname" (姓, *xing*), but in the composite *shizu* (氏族) would also refer to "clan" in the sense of the descent group (Fei, 1947, uses the term in this way; Faure, 2007, distinguishes between surname groups and lineages).

Contractual lineages share with associations basic organisational features, such as rotating leadership and open membership. In traditional villages, the various forms of lineage have always coexisted. For example, an inheritance lineage might create associations for specific purposes that include only some of its members. These associations may take the form of a lineage but can also be of a more general associational form (Cohen, 1990).

Hence, it appears that the defining difference between lineages and other associational forms is "descent" as *zu* (氏族). What does "descent" eventually mean? The context in which groups related via descent define their shared identity is migration. Imperial China was a society shaped by migration, from North to South, from coastal areas to interior territories, with different spatial reach and scope. Typically, genealogies refer to original settlers, and larger groups are defined via chain migration to some place of secondary origin. This is where surname and lineage relate to each other: in most cases, descent as a genealogical notion is at the same time reflecting a history of migration. Ultimately, all people with the same surname may go back to some ancestor in the remote past, and later generations migrated to many different places, where they established their local lineages. As a result, the borderlines between the different concepts are blurred. Emigrants typically maintain their ties with their native villages and may even, at least in first-generation migrants, maintain the idea of returning home (creating the social type of the perennial sojourner) (Watson, 2004). In this setting, native place becomes dominant over consanguinity in defining kinship. This explains why the intensive and continuing activities of Chinese emigrant families in "searching their roots" (寻根, *xun gen*) include the reconstruction of ancestral halls (Kuah-Pearce, 2011).

Let us summarise our complex discussion of Chinese kinship. It emerges that on a more abstract conceptual level, we need to distinguish neatly between consanguinity, conviviality, descent, and ritual as a performative means to define and manifest descent. Whereas in ritual terms descent is clearly defined as patrilineal, conviviality widely opens the reference of kinship relations, especially in terms of territory, that is, the village, and regarding affinal relatives. The territorial aspect stands at the centre of Zheng's notion of "control-subordination lineage," the affinal aspect looms large in the formation of alliances between lineages that are ritually defined as patrilineal. In comparison, descent is a much broader category, because it can be almost arbitrarily extended via expanding the genealogical depth, if only artificially. Yet, via ritual even most elusive forms of descent can be performed in creating organisations that follow the

pattern of a contractual lineage. One powerful motive always was shared economic interests. The case of the Huang allows for further detailing this conceptual framework.

The Huang at Shenzhen: The Complex Interaction between Lineage, Descent, and Surname

According to common accounts of descent, the Huang in Shenzhen trace themselves back to the famous official and scholar Huang Qiaoshan (黄峭山, 872–953) who is himself identified as direct 128th-generation descendant of the Yellow Emperor Huang Di. Today, almost three million Huang in Guangdong province might claim direct descendance to him (*Baidu baike,* 2019b). In the turbulent times of the collapse of the Tang dynasty, Huang Qiaoshan moved to Fujian. He selected three of his twenty-one sons to be his formal descendants, thereby establishing three branches. Later, in another turbulent time, when the Song Empire moved southward under the pressure of the Mongols, some of his descendants settled in today's Shenzhen territory.

In modern Shenzhen, these genealogical roots are shared by various groups with the surname Huang. Basically, these divide into three, which is, however, not exhaustive, but represents the most salient pattern: the "guangfu" Huang, that is, the Shenzhen natives who speak a dialect of Cantonese and whose territory concentrates in the original Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the Hakka Huang at Longgang district, and the Chaoshan Huang who mostly immigrated to Shenzhen after 1978. Our focal case is taken from the first group.

The two "guangfu" Huang villages in Shenzhen, Xiasha and Shangsha, trace themselves back to a 15th-generation descendant of Huang Qiaoshan, Huang Moutang, born in 1183, and who is physically palpable in the artefact of his grave and a pagoda which is also a Buddhist temple and which was designated cultural heritage of Guangdong Province in 2002 (for pictures of the tomb, see Hu 2013). He is the ancestor of the Xiasha Huang, but also of other branches at other places, so that the Xiasha ancestral hall is devoted to Huang Siming, a ninth-generation descendant as immediate ancestor of the Xiasha Huang (*Geren tushuguan,* 2019c). In comparison, the Hakka Huang at Kengzi village, Longgang, refer to Huang Chaoxuan who lived during the transition from Ming to Qing, with a diffuse reference back to a Song dynasty official named Huang Liao who is in turn identified as another ninth-generation descendant of Huang Qiaoshan (Liu, 2001: 56 f.).

Migration history and genealogy identify the boundaries between various Huang groups and genealogical branches and establish different degrees of relatedness. Ritual activities perform the genealogical distinctions, resulting in lived distinctions between groups demarcated via surname, lineage, or branches of lineages. In addition, there are also linguistic markers of genealogical boundaries (Cohen, 1996 [1960]). Whereas the first wave of immigrants in Song dynasty merged linguistically with what emerged as local Cantonese, the wave triggered by the Ming-Qing transition and later by the reopening of coastal areas for settlement retained the Hakka dialect. Until most recently the further division of surname groups into lineages was also reflected in lineage-specific dialects (the so-called clan language 祖宗话, *zuzonghua*), which relates to different cohorts of

migrants: for example, the Hakka Huang at Kengzi divide into two clans in different settlements, distinguished by different times of arrival in the area (Liu, 2001: 230ff.).

In a similar vein, the Huang at Shangxia and Xiasha represent different branches at the lowest level of partitioning: The Shangxia Huang are currently renovating their Ancestral Hall, devoted to Huang Moutang, on a "Cultural Square" according to the Xiasha model. The hall and the associated Tianhou temple can be traced back to Ming times, but have been reconstructed many times. At the border between the two communities, a large stone bears an inscription celebrating their perennial cooperation. Both relate to Huang Moutang, but the Xiasha hall is devoted to one of his descendants. These ritual distinctions mirror substantial differences in the development of the two villages.

Both Shangsha and Xiasha had strong leaders who set up development corporations in the 1980s. The background of this was the fuzziness of the land property rights system: according to Chinese law, rural land is owned by the collectives, which, however, may represent different administrative structures in practice (Ho, 2001, 2013). In the Pearl River Delta, these often turned out to be the original single-lineage villages. Via the establishment of corporations, the assets were shifted out of the administrative structure, which was crucial when Shenzhen abolished the rural status of the urbanising areas, normally implying that the land was transformed into state-owned land (Po, 2008; Trappel, 2011). However, land use rights could be kept under the control of the corporations. As has been well documented, the outcome differs widely even in the Pearl River Delta (Wong, 2015). Often, the villagers were bought out by the municipal government to make the land accessible to urban development, with developers in charge. But there are important cases where the villages retained control, as in our cases.

When the legal form became available in the early 1990s, the development corporations obtained the structure of "shareholding cooperatives" (股份合作公司, *gufen hezuo gongsi*). The villagers are individual shareholders, but their right to sell the shares is restricted, so that the collective status is preserved. The companies are led by elite members of the lineage, with formal positions as village heads or party secretaries. We mentioned Huang Yingchao, the lineage head of Xiasha Huang and former village head: He has been Chairman of the Xiasha cooperative shareholding company for more than twenty years, is not a member of Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of Futian People's Congress.

The two villages underwent rapid economic development, yet with distinct patterns. Shangsha early established an industrial park which later was transformed into a high-tech science park. Xiasha, bordering Hong Kong, became notorious for its red-light zones and as "second wife town" for Hong Kong Chinese. It shed this past off through a comprehensive process of urban renewal led by Huang Yingchao, resulting in its current status as a leisure location in Shenzhen. This redevelopment included the construction of a new ritual infrastructure, a lavish ancestral hall and a Houwang temple located on a large public square dotted with instalments of religious and mythical references from all over the world (for pictures, see O'Donnell, 2017b, 2018).

The shareholding cooperatives are directly responsible for planning, funding, and implementing these ritual activities and architectures. In fact, they bear much resemblance with traditional lineage corporations, to the extent that one can say that the

corporation is congruous with the lineage (compare Trémon 2015a; Zhou, 2014). In the context of single-lineage villages, this also means that village administration is partly merged with the business structure. This is not just reflecting lineage collective agency but is a direct outcome of administrative practices, as Po (2012) analyses in much detail: the municipal government operates under tight fiscal constraints and therefore co-opts or just shifts many tasks of grassroots-level administration, public services, and infrastructure investment to the former villages, now incorporated as business entities.

This high degree of institutional ambiguity of the cooperatives roots in the socialist transformation after 1949: shareholding cooperatives are institutional successors to the rural collectives. This is reflected in the Xiasha museum, which displays all production team leaders of the Maoist era as the predecessors of today's leadership. As has been noticed by fieldworkers early after 1978 (Potter and Potter, 1990: 261ff., 334), the socialist collectives in fact were very similar to lineage corporations, with the only difference that the traditional relationship between elites and common members was overturned. That means, the language of socialist property can be also read in terms of traditional meanings, such as in the context of property rights, which traditionally also distinguished between formal ownership and possession of use rights (soil and subsoil rights).

Today, the institutional hybridity of shareholding cooperatives is directly reflected in the governance structure and the distribution of shares. The shares of Xiasha cooperative divide into two types, one is the "collective shares" (50.99 per cent) and the other is the "cooperative shares" (49.01 per cent). The collective shares have accumulated via retained profits in the past. In the governance structure, there is a "collective assets management committee" that supervises these assets. This committee has voting rights in the General Assembly of shareholder and is chaired by the Party secretary (who is a relative of Huang Yingchao). Clearly, although the cooperatives are independent business entities, by means of this construct, there is a direct line of intervention via the parallel structures of government and party by which, for example, urban infrastructure projects can be negotiated (as described in Po, 2012). However, the CCP representatives are also members of the local clan.

The cooperative shares partly retain features of shares in traditional lineage corporations, since certain lineage rules apply, staying in tension with Chinese law, such as limiting inheritance to the patrilineal line, as demarcated by the inclusion in the genealogy (家谱, *jiapu*). The Xiasha Corporation keeps the number of shares constant, originally allocated to the community per household, represented by the male head. As a result, in-marrying women do not own shares, and sons inherit the shares, but the number of shares is not increased (which effectively results in joint ownership of shares if there is more than one son, dividing the dividends among them). Daughters do not inherit shares, but receive a compensation, mainly via the dowry, as they are not included in the *jiapu*. Huang women own shares, but they cannot take shares with them when marrying. Hence, the patriarchal household remains the central unit, which is institutionally supported by the fact that ownership of shares is tied to the registration *hukou*. As in the case described by Kipnis (2017) in Shandong, traditional patriarchal rules are

adapted to the modern legal system but are not superseded (he speaks of "viricentricity" to catch this hybridisation).

The ritual dimension of the Shareholding cooperative is manifest in various activities that are funded by the company. Central events are rites held at Qingming and Chongyang holidays, with the former being simpler, held only at the Xiasha ancestral hall, and the latter also including the Huang Moutang tomb. These rites follow the full traditional prescriptions, again salient in the fact that women are not allowed to take part in the rituals that are performed inside the Ancestral Hall. They are always followed by a traditional *pencai* (盆菜) feast (mostly translated as "common pot" or "big basin").

The common pot was also noticed as a peculiar ritual activity in the New Territories by James Watson (1987, 2014; cf. Chan SC, 2010; for more detail, see Guo and Herrmann-Pillath, 2019). It is a mix of many valuable food items, and the pot is shared by all individuals attending the meal, eating directly from the pot, which is obviously differing from standard practices in China. Traditionally, common pot feasting was an important lineage ritual at certain events, such as New Year or the birth of a son, and it contained a substantial amount of fat pork. For many poor lineage members, sharing a common pot was the rare occasion to eat pork. "Pork" had also the meaning of distributing the income from lineage assets equally, via the free provision of pork bought by the profits, "dividing the pork" among the lineage members. Hence, the common pot is a ritual that embodies values of village solidarity: Everybody eats from the same pot, and nobody needs to watch whether she or he may take away something from others.

The Huang modified the common pot, which is signalled by a variant of the name, the "big common pot" (大盆菜, *da pencai*) (*Di yi xing zuo wang,* 2017; *Shenzhen shangbao,* 2016). It is also served at the World Conventions of Huang, thus celebrating the global community. It has been even registered as a regional cultural heritage item and as a trademark. In the local Xiasha museum, a large space is devoted to *pencai*, with two life-sized bronze statue arrangements showing locals feasting at two tables. Noteworthy, the Shenzhen flagship museum, the *Shenzhen bowuguan*, replicates this installation and has a video installation with a lengthy presentation of the Huang ancestral rites.

As a local leader, Huang Yingchao embodies the hybridity of the cooperative which also creates tensions. In 2016, members of the local lineage used the site of the ancestral hall to stage a protest, complaining that dividends are too small, and profits are misappropriated through obscure channels (*Beiliu shenghuo*, 2017). Huang villagers receive a fixed rent from their shares of CNY 10,000 annually: most of the retained profits are controlled via the "Management committee." Lineage members chose the ritual stage to express their complaints, thus invoking the moral economy of the lineage as performed, for example, in the *pencai* feast. Meanwhile, the case has been withdrawn. This shows that processes of stratification have unfolded, gradually reproducing traditional patterns of elite formation within lineages.

The Shareholding cooperative stands at the centre of a network of Huang business. As in most urban villages (Chung and Unger, 2013), the villagers own their own apartment blocks which go back to the first stage of development of urban villages where villagers used their plots for private homes to construct buildings with more storeys to accommodate migrant workers. The renewal of this settlement requires coordination via the

cooperative. After renewal, the new apartments can generate rental income of CNY 20,000–30,000 per month and household. The company is also the coordinator of other investments in the area, such as hotels, restaurants, and other facilities, which are mostly owned by Huang (though often rented out to non-Huang entrepreneurs). The cooperative coordinates a Huang business network that reaches far beyond the urban village. It has set up many subsidiaries, mostly 100 per cent owned, led by Huang directors and operating in other domains and areas of business (the information on these networks can be retrieved from a proprietary database accessible against a fee, https://www.tianyancha.com/). These Huang directors in turn own or lead other business entities, which involve other investors, often from the respective kinship networks. One medium by which such joint investments can be coordinated is the surname transcending the boundaries of the Xiasha lineage.

When investigating into Huang business networks, it is essential to distinguish between surname group and lineages. The Xiasha Huang compare with other Huang in being very actively involved in urban development. There is the interesting case of Lvjing Holding Ltd, one of the biggest developers in China, listed in Hong Kong, which cooperates with Shangsha village. The founder was a Huang from Maoming who migrated to Shenzhen. Recently, he donated substantial money to rebuild the 700-year-old Huang ancestral temple at Yangmei town, Guandi village (*Wo de Maoming,* 2011). Business people with surname Huang are major figures in Shenzhen real estate business. According to a 2016 newspaper report, various Huang serve as chairpersons of at least 19 real estate companies in Shenzhen (*Shenzhen fangchanye xinxi wang,* 2016). However, many of those Huang emigrated from Chaoshan region to Shenzhen as construction workers when the SEZ was launched, and few of them are direct relatives.

An intriguing observation is that competition among lineages drives the real estate business in Shenzhen via building urban attractions, such as big shopping malls or convention halls, in the context of redeveloping urban villages: Xiasha has KK Mall with Jingji group, Shangsha has Lvjing Mall with Hong Kong Lvjing group (as mentioned, chaired by a Huang), Gangxia (Wen clan) has Hilton Mall with Dazhonghua group (this is also chaired by a Huang) and so on. In other words, we observe a form of territorial competition between lineages over control of land and valuable real estate, which involves relative status in Shenzhen society, being signalled by prestige real estate projects. Ritual activities also signal status, such as the *pencai* events which often boast their size and number of guests: this aspect has also become prominent in Hong Kong, where *pencai* often have assumed the role of a political statement in the context of Hong Kong politics, with the Heung Yee Kuk as a major protagonist (Chan SC, 2010).

Transregional and Transnational Networking: From Surname to Descent, and Back

As we have seen, the Xiasha Huang in Shenzhen have evolved from a rural to an urban lineage, closely interacting with global Huang, and mediated via Huang branches at other locations: for example, the General Secretary of the World Huang General Chamber of Commerce is located at Xiamen, where a large ritual hall is devoted to

Jiangxia culture, and the local branch only evokes a short history going back to the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century, with Huang Peisong as the founding personality, a military leader in early Republican China. Via Xiamen, close connections to Taiwan and Overseas Huang are ritually mobilised (Sina, 2011).

Fujian was an important destination of the early Huang migrations, resulting in a strong concentration of Huang in this region. In the context of the current analysis of business networking, it is highly significant that Zheng (2001: 237f., 317f.) identifies the Huang as a group that stood out as a "dispersed lineage" in Qing times. That means, the Huang were very active in creating lineage organisations that were not based on consanguinity and therefore would figure as "inheritance lineages" but as ritual communities that were open to all Huang who had migrated to Fujian. Various local lineages might just donate to be included in a central Huang ancestral hall in Xianxi. Accordingly, this pattern could also be extended into business activities: Zheng has the example of a "Hall of Public Accumulation" established by various Huang lineages in Minxian that operated as a business entity into the Republican era. As we see, there has always been a strong dynamic between lineage organisation and all kinds of ritual mobilisation that relate to the surname Huang and invoke shared descent beyond more direct genealogical relations (for similar cases, see Glahn, 2016: 336ff.). This dynamic is partly institutionally driven by the surname associations.

The modern international movement of surname associations was gaining speed in Taiwan in the 1980s, building on the presence of local associations worldwide, but especially in Southeast Asia (*Baidu baike,* 2019c). The function of these associations is mainly to organise ritual activities, such as establishing ancestral halls and genealogical research, but also philanthropic activities and maintaining closer interaction among members, especially business-related, and even conflict resolution. There are local surname associations in many countries that provide the ground on which the world association is built. For example, in Singapore, there are more than 200 surname associations which have been strongly supported by the government as a counterweight to native place and dialect identity politics (Chan, 2002). Almost everywhere, a central ritual artefact is an ancestral hall.

Now, obviously the World Huang association does not automatically include all global Huang but include only those who actively recognise both notions of *zong* and *qin* in their social life. What does that mean? Most importantly, it means that these are individuals who are aware of and appreciate their roots and actively "search" for them. Specifically, this refers to connecting their current status, for example, as an US American national in the third migrant generation, with the native place of the original migration event, and to get involved in certain ritual practices, such as visiting ancestral halls and contributing to genealogies (for a Canadian example, see Wong, 2017). In the case of the Huang, one core historical reference is to *Jiangxia* (江夏) as one of the first destinations of migration of the early Huang tribes, which is today a suburban district of Wuhan, Hubei Province. During Warring States period, the Huang originally had an independent kingdom in the territory of modern Inner Mongolia, but after destruction fled to Hubei (the history of Huang migration is overviewed on *Jiangxia Huang zu wang,* 2019b). In Hubei province, there are many counties and cities that contain the

name Huang, which goes back to these migration events (such as Huangmei or Huanggang). There are 12 original branches and locations (郡望, *junwang*) of Huang going back to the early Empire (*Jiangxia Huang zu wang,* 2019c). Therefore, the term *Jiangxia* is often used as a synonym for the Huang. Many types of associations connect to *Jiangxia*, apart from *Jiangxia* Huang associations also *Jiangxia* culture study groups and similar kinds. One of the richest websites about Huang is named "Jiangxia Huangzu wang" (http://www.jxhzw.org/, accessed 6 March 2019). Another website (http://www.ihuang.org/a8-01.htm, accessed 6 March 2019) gives a list of Huang associations worldwide, which probably is incomplete, but reveals an interesting pattern, as there are almost no associations in the northern and western provinces of China.

Websites and WeChat sites devoted to surname and ancestral activities proliferate in China. If we look at the main page of the *Huangshi zong qin wang* in the World Wide Web, apart from offering general information about Huang and related activities, it is a pool of regional and local websites devoted to the Huang. The site is managed by a group of Huang from all over China, with a concise organisational structure and a detailed division of labour, including legal aspects, cultural history, and business (this information is publicised: http://www.ihuang.org/b2-01-0001.htm, accessed 19 January 2019).

One can speak of a "competition for attention" among websites with often similar content, but different design and audiences. Many sites have become obviously defunct and incomplete: one factor is that communication moved to WeChat. Another factor is that the organisers of websites may learn about different needs and audiences. Websites may seem inactive in Chinese, but are active in English, with many news about Huang activities overseas, such as in Malaysia. Most sites share a similar structure. They normally include

- an introduction to the respective local Huang Surname Association and its charter,
- a calendar of events,
- an introduction of various ancestral halls, their locations and related information,
- information about the genealogy,
- a list of famous Huang and their lives,
- a news page,
- a list of companies led by Huang,
- and other items (such as books on Huang) and
- if existing, information about specific activities or institutions connected to the surname association.

The status of various Huang websites varies widely, with different geographical scope, from provinces to counties or even urban districts. For example, the Jiangxi website apparently was launched with great vigour, but faded out in 2015 (http://www.jxhs.org.cn/, 19 accessed May 2018). But take the active website of the Hainan Jiangxia culture association, the *Hainan Jiangxia wenhua wang* see above. At the time of our first access (http://www.hnjxyjh.com/index.asp, accessed 19 May 2018), on the front page, the recent celebration of ancestral rites devoted to the ancestor Huang Chi are

documented who is the ancestor of an estimated 300,000 Huang (the site is still active, accessed 21 January 2019). Another website of the Hainan Huang surname association, the *Hainan Huang shi wang* (see above), continuously reports about local ancestral rites (Hainan Huang shi wang, 2019). The website of the Guangxi Huang community (http://www.gxhszqh.com) has been very active, too, and features recent news such as about the visit of the former Chairman of the global Huang surname association, Huang Muhe, at Guangxi, holding ancestral rites, or the visit of a Huang delegation from Jiangxi. This kind of news makes an important pattern visible: the Internet reflects underlying networking activities in the "real world," such as mutual visits and meetings. It is important noticing that there is an overlap with tourism, but often there is a clear ritualistic component. Yet, this does not imply that the halls relate to a genuine genealogical relationship between the visitors and the local Huang.

As we mentioned, an important trend is the shift to WeChat where users can register for a public address (公众号, *gong zhong hao*, easily searchable via typing "黄氏" into WeChat search engine). This makes referencing complicated, because the WeChat content is even less stable than the www content. The WeChat sites feed their users with regular information on Huang-related ritual events, such as the *Jiangxia Huang shi jiazu wang* (江夏黄氏家族网), which also has a website (https://688522.kuaizhan.com/, accessed 7 March 2019). Another major WeChat site is the *Quanqiu Huang shi yi jiaqin* (全球黄氏一家亲) (for an introduction, see *Baidu baike,* 2019d). This has various rubrics, including a "Huang shopping city" and information about ritual activities. Other services include a site where users can post messages on "searching the root" (寻根, *xungen*) activities. The Huang Shopping City (黄氏商城, *Huang shi shangcheng*) is an electronic shop where Huang can buy and sell products. The shop is handled by a Shenzhen registered company, the Shenzhen Huang Surname Culture Web Technology Company Ltd (深圳市黄氏文化网络技术有限公司; for a report, see *Rong hui dao*, 2017, accessed 21 January 2019). The company is not mainly working for profit, its premises have been donated by a Huang leader, and about twenty Huang work without formal salary. This apparent nature of a "social enterprise" is also reflected in the description of the Huang internet shop as "shared benefit economy" (分享经济, *fenxiang jingji*) and "common benefit management" (共享管理, *gongxiang guanli*), which means, for example, that there are no fees for selling and buying via the site. According to the company, the Huang site offers many advantages over ordinary shops.

The Huang Chamber of Commerce (黄氏商会, *Huang shi shanghui*) addresses Huang companies and offers many services such as business communication and supporting the recruitment of personnel. Again, it puts strong emphasis on moral integrity and transparency in its operations, with the motto of "mutual help and shared benefit, jointly creating value" (互助同享，共创价值, *huzhu tongxiang, gongchuang jiazhi*). Members can post information about their companies on the site. For example, one specific aim is to develop reliable supplier relations among Huang companies. As in the case of the websites, WeChat shows some competition between various Huang service providers. An example is the *Huang shi zong qin hui* (黄氏宗亲惠), which combines an internet shop with services related to ritual activities, such as information about ancestral halls.

How is the shared identity of Huang established? A central notion is "Jiangxia culture," hence directly related to myths of origin. This ties back to the notion of "family customs" (家风, *jiafeng*) that are codified in texts, poems, and hymns (for an illuminating historical account, see *Sichuan sheng Jiangxia wenhua yanjiuhui,* 2015; the *Jiangxia Huang zu wang* (2019d) has a separate section for this; the WeChat sites similarly have special sections for *jiafeng* or *jiaxun*). For example, the local Huang in Shenzhen always recite a poem at festive occasions that is attributed to Huang Qiaoshan, while at the same time this reference establishes a connection to the Huang worldwide who relate themselves to "Jiangxia culture." The previously mentioned ancestral hall at Xiamen connected to the World Chamber of Commerce has a special showroom where visitors learn not only about the *jiafeng* of Huang but can also search via a computer for *jiafeng* of many other Chinese surname groups. This emphasis on traditional moral conceptions of kinship is also manifest in public events, such as celebrating Huang ancestors as moral exemplars (Bao'an government, 2018).

The latter observation reveals that the myths of origin also highlight the direct connection between lineage, surname, and identity as Chinese (Kawagusa, 2016). The Huang communicate a notion of cultural identity that is deeply embedded in Chinese identity in terms of shared culture, beyond subethnic and even ethnic divisions. That means, being a Huang means belonging to a cultural line of descent of the largest scope, even with mythical origins. Cultural descent finds its concrete expression in genealogies, which interlock and are nested, ultimately leading back to the "Yellow emperor." Naturally, the Huang are very active in the official "Grand Rites" offered to the Yellow Emperor (*Jiangxia Huang shi jiazu wang,* 2019). Another fascinating example are the 2017 national rites devoted to the mythical emperor Shundi, where delegations of various surname groups attended, including a large Huang delegation (*Jiangxia Huang zu wang,* 2019e). The cult of Shundi is new in contemporary China and is supported by the government, while also serving business interests in tourism (see in detail McNeal, 2011).

This bridge between rituals of descent and cultural identity can be also diagnosed on the local level: The Huang at Xiasha strongly emphasise their roots in Han culture: for example, at the entrance gate to Xiasha plaza is a huge statue depicting the first local Huang "jinshi" graduate in Imperial China. This is essential to claiming their status as an elite lineage in the context of Shenzhen metropolis. Many of the local lineages can trace themselves back to migration events in Song dynasty, where often members of the Confucian elites were leaders. In invoking those "high ancestors," they can signal social status based on cultural excellence in the past (Cohen, 2017). This strategy of translating cultural capital into social capital is also very pronounced in the case of Hakka who tend to represent exemplars of Confucian morality and family norms, for example, in downplaying many rituals of popular religion (e.g. practiced by Chaoshan people) and putting strong emphasis on ancestral cult. Another telling example is reported by Inazawa (2016): in the Cantonese city of Shanwei, the local Huang surname association is very active in the context of a strong presence of "fisher people" (蛋, *dan*, "Tanka" living on boats) who conventionally are seen as a subethnic group, even with Mongol origin, but who have introduced various activities in establishing ancestral halls and genealogies most recently, thus demonstrating Han origin.

To sum up this section, surname groups with global reach perform their identity in close connection with myths of shared cultural descent, interlocking with local rituals on ancestral worship that result in the construction of nested descent, directly connecting the local and the global. Let us now turn to assessing the Huang case in terms of the conceptual framework of the second section.

Analytical Resumé and Conclusion

In reflecting our case of Huang, it is stimulating to go back to earlier contributions. In her study of a Hong Kong lineage with now global reach, Chan (2001) argues that the lineage has become "de-territorialised" as an "imagined community." Even though, as Watson (2004) muses, eventually land rights appear to be an anchor that grounds lineage identity in claims on economic assets, for many modern lineages, these are much less important than other benefits that can be gained from cooperation within the lineage, such as business opportunities. Chan's term "imagined community" points to the fact that kinship ritual has a performative function: it is not a given structure of kinship relations that causally determines the structure of a group and the interactions among its members, but via the ritual activities this structure emerges.

Yet the ritual imposes a certain formal structure on a group, especially via the genealogies. This is the dimension of *zong* in Chinese kinship. But *zong* is a highly flexible and open category, as varying genealogical depth would theoretically allow to perform groups of any scope and reach in the present, as is visible in Huang practices. Therefore, *qin* matters. The performative role of *qin* springs to the eye, as this is predetermined neither by *zong* nor by biological relatedness. As many authors, such as recently Trémon (2014, 2015a) have argued, what binds a local kin group together are certain claims and manifestations of a shared moral economy which is rooted in certain feelings of closeness. Indeed, the Huang villagers at Xiasha have expressed their concerns about violations of this moral economy by their leaders. Hence, *qin* represents the dimension of conviviality, which is not congruent with ritual descent.

This is where the kinship notion ties up with the more general notion of *guanxi*, certainly one of the best researched indigenous notions in studying the economy–society interface in China (for surveys, see Bian 2018; Chen et al., 2013). This controversial concept remains firmly established in Chinese studies, reflecting similar troubles in catching the specificity of the Chinese case as with reference to kinship. *Guanxi* stay orthogonal to Western concepts of social relations, because they appear to be "weak ties" mediated in a symbolic frame that evokes "strong ties" in terms of moral obligations of reciprocity (a Chinese perspective on this is Zhai, 2013). In this sense, the global Huang networking is a *guanxi* phenomenon, in the strict sense. Establishing a global community of Huang suggests the possibility to be "close" (invoked by the term *qin*) even though the actual relationship is just "weak ties," in a deflationary ("Western") view. Performing kinship rituals with varying reach and scope is a means to create the emotional effervescence that imbues weak network relations with a stronger emotional bondage that fosters reciprocity and cooperation (for a general sociological perspective on this role of ritual, see Collins, 2005). In addition, as discussed in the second section, we need to take

the additional level of associational forms into consideration: the Huang surname association explicitly bridges between kinship ritual and more generic associational practices, which create platforms and audiences for the formation of *guanxi*.

This view would apparently imply that in the end kinship ritual is arbitrary, as it is just a symbolic medium of networking. But that does not do justice to the peculiar ways how the kinship medium operates across various contexts. The two concepts of kinship and *guanxi* have also been combined systematically by Kuah-Pearce (2011) in her study of Singapore lineages activating their relationship with native villages in Mainland China. She introduced the notion of a "cultural network": Chinese kinship is focused on cultural descent, which is embodied in the corresponding rituals and a wide range of artefacts and practices, with "culture" being conceived as a form of life rooted in the imagination of the "native place." In the Huang case, cultural descent is not only embodied in standard items such as ancestral halls but also more mundane practices and objects. We mentioned the "common pot" feasts; another example is the Huang wine, which is sold to Huang at a steep discount, and with a bottle designed by a Huang, and similar items.

At this crucial point, it is necessary to notice that the concept of kinship has undergone radical revisions in a recent anthropological research (with landmark contributions such as Schneider, 1984 or Carsten, 2004). This view decidedly rejects any reference to "biological" criteria to define and diagnose kinship in specific societies and communities and approaches kinship as a cultural construct (for an overview, see Sahlins, 2013). However, this does not mean that kinship becomes arbitrary, as the cultural construct, in a specific context, creates a special form of relationship between individuals as "interrelated selves" and specific forms of collective identities. Indeed, this is what Huang villagers at Xiasha see in the "common pot" feast: It expresses that the "you is in the I, and the I is in the you" (a common saying: 你中有我、我中有你, *ni zhong you wo, wo zhong you ni*), reflecting the intimate closeness and group spirit of the lineage (族群宗亲理念, *zuqun zongqin linian*) (Sina, 2016).

One way to avoid the reduction of kinship to arbitrary symbolic constructivism is Sangren's (2013) concept of the Chinese family as "instituted fantasy": As an instituted fantasy, the reproduction of kinship roots in the desires of individual actors which are instigated by the cultural context, but also drive their agency in reproducing that context. That means, once the kinship relation is successfully performed, it loses its arbitrary nature in becoming an essential aspect of individual identities embedded in webs of interrelated selves which are demarcated by kinship terms and rituals.

Based on these conceptual clarifications, we can clearly discriminate between *guanxi* as mere social networking and kinship relations as mediated by rituals. This leads us back to the conceptual distinctions introduced by Zheng Zhenman (2001). If we refer these to the Huang case, one litmus test of distinguishing between kinship and *guanxi* is the form of the "contractual lineage": as in the case of *guanxi*, the contractual lineage builds on mutual benefit and shared interests in pursuing certain goals, mostly in an economic context. We have observed business concerns pursued by Huang that can be interpreted as modern transformations of this form: many companies are connected via mutual investments of Huang, with one Huang taking the lead as a CEO respectively, and others join as investors, sometimes also arranged into holdings and business groups.

This happens when surname relations are not simply mobilised in general *guanxi* terms, but also invoke the explicit activation of kinship ritual. In this case, shared cultural descent implies a relationship between individuals that goes beyond mere shared economic interests. Indeed, even the internet-based commercial activities of Huang tend to exploit modern forms of business that emphasise sharing and non-profit motivation, as we have seen. In our view, it is the kinship ritual that transforms mere *guanxi* into structures that corresponds to Zheng's type of a "contractual lineage."

Further, the Huang at Xiasha manifest many features of a "control-subordination lineage," with its strong territorial identity and the role of internal stratification in coordinating collective activities. In this regard, we also notice that another feature of traditional lineages survives today, as analysed in much detail by Zheng: this is the close interaction between formal institutions of government and processes of structuration of kinship. For example, in Imperial China registration for military service and *lijia* institutions were often conditioning certain lineage practices, such as inheriting *lijia* obligations, while also protecting the local community against intrusions of the state. The hybrid governance structure of the shareholding cooperative manifest a similar mutual conditioning of lineage dynamics and government.

In conclusion, in answering our original question what exactly is the "tradition" that appears to revive in contemporary kinship rituals, we highlight the highly adaptive nature of kinship ritual as a performative practice that mediates between closer kin defined by conviviality and expanding circles of "closeness" that are symbolically mediated by cultural descent as defined by *zong*. This is the view on traditional kinship that emerges from recent historical scholarship and which is highly productive in interpreting the current practices of the Huang. The most important divergence between the tradition and the contemporary conditions is the role of ideology and active promotion of patriarchal norms by the state: hence, an important question for future research is how far the current revival of Confucianism in China in wider society (Billioud and Thoraval, 2015) and the endorsement of values such as "filial piety" (孝, *xiao*) by the Chinese government might reconstitute the role of kinship in governing Chinese society that was shaping Imperial China, as part of an emerging pattern of cultural governance. After a long neglect of research on kinship in contemporary Chinese studies, we need a revival of this field.

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